

**When Eccentricity Is Virtue:
Virtuous Deeds in
Kinsei kijinden
(*Eccentrics of Our Times*, 1790)***

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As found in the Daoist classic the *Zhuangzi*, the term *kijin* (Ch. *jiren* 畸人) evokes a tradition that reveres difference and individuality.¹ In Tokugawa Japan Daoist ideas, particularly that of the *kijin*, enjoyed a great deal of popularity among literati (J. *bunjin*, Ch. *wenren*), people with scholarly, literary, and other creative aspirations. Merchant class scholar Ban Kōkei (1733-1806) aspired to be like a *kijin*, taking up a Daoist pen name, and many of his friends did the same.² Given this, one might conclude that in his biographical sketch collection *Kinsei kijinden* (*Eccentrics of Our Times*, 1790) Kōkei filled the pages solely with stories of crazy Daoist-style sages, or eccentric artists.

To the consternation of his friends, however, Kōkei devoted the opening chapter of *Kinsei kijinden* to the idea of virtue, rather than eccentricity per se, including many people known for their virtuous deeds (J. *tokkō*, Ch. *dexing* 德行) such as Confucian scholars Nakae Tōju (1608-1648) and Kaibara Ekiken (1630-1714). In his

introduction, Kōkei recounted his friends' opposition: "This account . . . has many people of virtuous deeds (*tokkō no hito*) appearing one after another. We shouldn't call them *kijin*. Isn't this the standard way (*tsune no michi*) people normally follow? What do you mean by this?"³ Kōkei also interspersed stories of virtuous deeds throughout the remaining four volumes, lending the whole an air of reverence, rather than hilarity. Such stories accorded equal dignity to a range of classes and renown, from the Ōbaku monk Tetsugen (1630-1682) in the second chapter, to merchant Muromachi Sōhō (dates unknown) in the fourth, to a humble Yamashina farmer in the third. Since Kōkei wrote of virtuous deeds throughout the text, rather than only in the beginning, his writing suggests a personal commitment to ideas of virtue. Given this, readers cannot ignore the idea of virtuous deeds in *Kinsei kijinden*.

Considering the historical context of *Kinsei kijinden*, it might appear that Kōkei included the "virtuous deeds" stories to appease Tokugawa authorities. Without a doubt, Tokugawa intellectual and commercial concerns not only accommodated power, but also used it for its own purposes. In *Japan in Print*, Mary Elizabeth Berry explored how the creation of the "library of public information" negotiated Tokugawa authority on the one hand, and the market economy, which encouraged freedom on the other.⁴ This explanation seems appropriate since *Kinsei kijinden* appeared during the Kansei Reforms (1787-1793), a time when Chief Senior Councilor Matsudaira Sadanobu (1758-1829) overhauled government bureaucracy and finances. The reforms included the 1790 Proscription of Heterodoxy (*igaku no kin*) that required Song Confucianism in shogunal academies, and restricted publica-

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¹ See, for example, a reference to *kijin* (translated as "the man alone") in Martin Palmer, trans., *The Book of Chuang Tzu* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 54-55.

² Kōkei's name Kandenshi ("child of the fallow field") recalls the Daoist thought of Zhuang Zhou and Laozi celebrating the useless. The writer Ueda Akinari (1734-1809) used the name Senshi Kijin, and poet Chōmu (1732-1795) drew his name from a story of Zhuang Zhou dreaming he was a butterfly.

³ Ban Kōkei, *Kinsei kijinden*, ed. Munemasa Isoo (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1972) [hereafter *KKD*], 9.

⁴ See Berry, *Japan in Print* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 160-173. For an extended discussion on the tensions between public and private spaces through art, see Mary Elizabeth Berry, "Public Life in Authoritarian Japan," *Daedalus* 127, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 133-165.

tions that questioned the government or threatened public morals.⁵ Although the Kansei Reforms did precipitate incidents such as the 1791 punishment of comical prose writer Santō Kyōden (1761-1816), they did not create ideological uniformity among the populace. Since the intellectual landscape continued to foster multiple and often syncretic strains of Daoist thought, Confucianism, and Buddhism, we cannot explain the "virtuous deeds" stories in terms of a desire to conform to official policy. Furthermore, the Kansei Reforms and *Kinsei kijinden* fall within a tight time window, making a cause-and-effect relationship unlikely. Kōkei's introduction is dated the sixth month of 1788, suggesting that the manuscript was already complete twelve months after Sadanobu took office.⁶ Since Kōkei's writing reflects a great deal of care, he probably did not complete the entire manuscript in a year reacting to the newly restrictive environment. In each of the one hundred-plus stories, Kōkei used language styles to suit the individual in question, with more colloquial language for commoners and more formal prose for scholars.⁷ This suggests Kōkei's commitment to showing off the distinctive qualities of individuals, not ideological conformity.

A look at the field of biographical writing at this time suggests that *Kinsei kijinden* was a response to the official corruption and popular unrest that inspired the Kansei Reforms, rather than a response to the Kansei Reforms themselves. In 1789, Matsudaira Sadanobu commissioned a biographical collection that resembled the virtuous deeds stories in *Kinsei kijinden*. Thus, Kōkei and Sadanobu both collected stories of notable individuals in the recent past, with the implicit purpose of teaching their readers. Although the organizing principles of these collections differed, they both appealed to a common moral heritage. *Kōgiroku* (*Record of Righteous-*

ness and Filial Piety) compiled biographies of exemplary people — faithful servants, chaste wives, filial children. This collection saw print in 1801, eleven years after the publication of *Kinsei kijinden*. While *Kōgiroku* outlined the merits of people with righteousness and filial piety, rather than *kijin*, many of them had also appeared in *Kinsei kijinden*.⁸

Less than a decade before *Kinsei kijinden* was completed, another biographical collection appeared that also used stories of unusual people to recognize and recover a shared past. *Hōsa kyōshaden* (*Biographies of Nagoya Madmen*, 1779) celebrated difference and deplored the self-interested behavior of society. As it was never published, it did not enjoy the same influence as *Kinsei kijinden*, but in the introductions we can see a similar impulse to evoke the past.⁹ In his introduction, Ban Kōkei hinted at a nostalgic personal motivation to write: "[I will tell] only of my fond remembrances these days of things that stuck in my heart, the pathos and humor of people of old about whom I have heard over the years, and of my own friends."¹⁰ The author of *Hōsa kyōshaden* also wished to write of strange people in response to a changed world: "And so, why are there so many of those petty people overrunning society with their honeyed words, acting like conventional worldly people in the decadent Final Age! I have strong feelings about this. Following those sentiments, I write this preface sighing and shedding bitter tears."¹¹

⁵ See *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, s.v. "Kansei Reforms," and *Heibonsha sekai daihyakka jiten*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Kansei kaikaku."

⁶ See *KKD*, 12.

⁷ See Furusō Masami, "*Kinsei kijinden*: Tayōna jinbutsuzō wo kaita gabun denki shū," in *Koten no jiten* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 1986), 12:43.

⁸ *Kokushi daijiten*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Kōgiroku." For further discussion of *Kōgiroku* in relation to *Kinsei kijinden*, see Patti Kameya, "Paupers, Poets, and Paragons: Eccentricity as Virtue in *Kinsei kijinden* (*Eccentrics of Our Times*, 1790)" (unpublished Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2006), 212.

⁹ Nakano Mitsutoshi, introduction to *Kinsei kijinden* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2005), 13-14.

¹⁰ *KKD*, 10.

¹¹ Tajihi Ikuo and Nakano Mitsutoshi, eds., *Tōdai Edo bakemono, Zaishin kiji, Kana sesetsu*, Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikei 97 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2000), 46. Translation referred to W. Puck Brecher, "Making Do with Madness: Applications of Aesthetic Eccentricism

By pairing *Hōsa kyōshaden* and *Kinsei kijinden*, we can understand a larger body of work that identifies a community defined by a shared heritage between writer and reader. The author of *Hōsa kyōshaden* branded his compilation with the place name of Hōsa, identifying a community blessed by the presence of "madmen." By dubbing his work *Kinsei kijinden*, Kōkei defined his community in terms of time, specifically "our times," a time shared between himself and his readers. *Kinsei kijinden* took its place in the catalogue of publisher Zeniya Sōshirō, among other works affirming a common culture through a range of artistic and intellectual activity. Although there are several works on *kyōshi* (comical Chinese poems), the bulk of the catalog is devoted to poetry and *sencha* (steeped tea). There are also a number of medical and Confucian texts.¹² Looking at Kōkei's work as a whole, we can also confirm Kōkei's concern with community identity, rather than light entertainment. Kōkei's other work is comprised largely of serious writing addressing two aspects of identity widely debated at this time, namely ethics and Japanese language studies. Kōkei headed a school of Japanese prose writing (*wabun*) and enjoyed fame in his time as one of the four best Japanese-style poets of Kyoto.¹³ In 1792 and 1793, he wrote two *kakun*, or household moral codes, demonstrating his commitment to ethical

issues.¹⁴

If ethics were Kōkei's main concern, why would he use the figure of the *kijin*? It is here that Kōkei departed from Sadanobu's *Kōgiroku*. While *Kōgiroku* was written to foster Confucian values, Kōkei wrote *Kinsei kijinden* to celebrate the idea of individual commitment to one's own values. In other words, Kōkei supported the idea of individualism, rather than conformity, as the main idea behind *kijin*. Kōkei reconciled ethics with the idea of *kijin* by pairing virtuous deeds with the idea of "wonder," an idea that inspired awe because of difference from the ordinary. In the following passages he linked virtuous deeds with the ideograph for wonder 奇 (J. *ki*, Ch. *qí*), rather than 崎 (J. *ki*, Ch. *jī*) of *kijin*, and encouraged his readers to understand virtue in terms of novelty. Thus, by connecting the ideas of virtue and individuality, Kōkei wrote *Kinsei kijinden* as an ethical text, and a fundamentally moral project.¹⁵ Concluding his account of Kaibara Ekiken, he wrote, "Before and after Jōkyō and Genroku [1684-1704] there were many famous Confucian scholars, and wondrous deeds and wondrous stories (*kikō*, *kiwa*); now with just these two teachers, Tōju and Ekiken, I make the opening move of this chapter on virtuous deeds (*tokkō no kan*)."¹⁶ To express the idea of "opening move," Kōkei used the characters 嚆矢, a term that is ordinarily read *kōshi* (heralding arrow) but was glossed as *hajime* (beginning). This term appeared in the context of a *Zhuangzi* passage that instructed to allow people to live freely and revel in their individual strengths:

[In response to the question, "If the world is not ruled, how can you improve people's hearts?"] Laozi said, "Take care

in Tokugawa and Meiji Japan" (unpublished Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 2005), 440. See also Brecher's discussion on 149-50, 152-53.

¹² Sasaki Harutaka, comp., *Wakatakesū* (Kyoto: Sasaki Chikuhōrō, 1975). For further discussion of the publisher, see Munemasa Isoo, *Kinsei Kyoto shuppan bunka no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Dōhōsha Shuppan, 1982), 45.

¹³ For Kōkei's *wabun* activity, see Kazama Seishi, "Ban Kōkei to *wabun no kai*" in *Ronshū kinsei bungaku*, vol. 5, *Akinari to sono jidai: kyōdō kenkyū*, ed. Takada Mamoru (Tokyo: Benseisha, 1994), 279-80. For Kōkei's poetic credentials, see Munemasa Isoo, "Shinninhō shin'ō wo meguru geibunka tachi," in *Nihon kinsei bun'en no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1977), 203-253.

¹⁴ For further discussion of Kōkei's *kakun*, see Patti Kameya, "When Businessmen Discuss Art: Communities of Arts and Ethics in Ōmi Merchant *kakun*," paper presented at the Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting, Chicago, Ill., March 28, 2009.

¹⁵ Nakano Mitsutoshi also addresses the ethical concerns of *Kinsei kijinden* in his introduction to *Kinsei kijinden*, especially p. 14.

¹⁶ *KKD*, 25.

how you play with people's hearts. People's hearts should not be shoved down or pushed up, for this yo-yoing up and down makes the heart either a prisoner or an avenging fury. . . . At rest, it is as deep as the abyss; when it is active, it is like a star in heaven. It races beyond anything that seeks to bind it, for this is in truth the heart of humanity!"¹⁷

Kōkei started *Kinsei kijinden* with Confucian scholars to celebrate their novelty, the wonder that they inspire. Thus, the virtuous teachers served to establish the concept of *kijin*, rather than stand as a foil for the more chaotic or "conventional" *kijin*.

By designating virtuous people (*tokkō no hito*) as *kijin*, Kōkei identified a moral crisis where virtuous deeds were rare. In this sense *Kinsei kijinden* shares its impulse with *Kōgiroku*. At the same time, in a departure from *Kōgiroku*, Kōkei raised a call to return to a more authentic time of following the "standard way" (*tsune no michi*) with *kijin* leading the way. In his introduction, Kōkei likened his society to a room full of drunks, where they have lost their ability to practice virtuous deeds. In this context, *kijin* appeared wondrous by being in touch with this lost past, and following the "standard way" of virtuous deeds: "[Considering people who do virtuous deeds is] like having a solitary sober person among people drinking into the night, forgetting the time and day. . . . [To] my own drunken eyes people devoted to the standard way (*tsune no michi*) appear wondrous (奇 *ki*). . . ." ¹⁸

In this way, Kōkei evoked an idea of individual virtue, where virtuous people followed their own paths as individuals, setting themselves apart from "people in society." In other words, their virtue itself made them individual and worthy of remark as *kijin*. Individual virtue encompassed not only attunement with an authentic "standard way," but also individual inclination. For Kōkei, initiative should arise not from promise of a reward, but from individual nature. In his introduction he continued, "compared to people in

society, regarding the elderly who work towards benevolence and righteousness, and the young who are loyal and filial, deeds of people like them ought to be called wondrous (奇 *ki*)."¹⁹

Since *Kinsei kijinden* identified the individual as a source of moral authority, the "virtuous deeds" stories cannot be explained in terms of yielding to Tokugawa authority. Rather than power, this study will focus on understandings of individual moral authority. This will help us understand why Kōkei and his contemporaries chose to write of both aesthetic and ethical topics, and how a community of readers negotiated between authority and freedom. While I cannot confirm how all readers responded to *Kinsei kijinden*, I would like to suggest that *Kinsei kijinden* became popular in part because it both affirmed individual nature and resonated with readers' anxieties about the moral climate of their times.

In much current scholarship on eighteenth-century Japan, the wondrous *kijin* figure often appeared as a way to propose societal alternatives. While such work did not exclude the problem of ethics, it tended to focus on *kijin* as outsiders or eccentrics in terms of artistic and intellectual expression. On the artistic side, Lawrence Marceau described the world of the "bunjin bohemian," and in his discussion of eccentric artists John Rosenfield translated the word *kijin* as "extraordinary persons."²⁰ In the intellectual realm Tetsuo Najita noted the intersection between Confucianism and Daoism, writing of Confucian-trained scholar *kijin* as seekers of alternative ways to know the world.²¹ W. Puck Brecher

¹⁷ Palmer, 84. Wade-Giles Romanization has been converted to Pinyin.

¹⁸ KKD, 9.

¹⁹ KKD, 9. Translation referred to Lawrence E. Marceau, *Takebe Ayatari: A Bunjin Bohemian in Early Modern Japan* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2004), 262-263.

²⁰ Marceau, *Takebe Ayatari*; John M. Rosenfield, *Extraordinary Persons: Japanese Artists (1560-1860) in the Kimiko and John Powers Collection* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Art Museums, 1988).

²¹ Tetsuo Najita, "History and Nature in Eighteenth-Century Tokugawa Thought," in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 4, *Early*

wrote of aesthetic eccentricism as a way to "[make] habitable an uncomfortable world."²² While Brecher mentioned the idea of Confucian influence in writings on *kijin* and other strange people, his work focused on the aesthetic aspects of this problem, rather than on ethics.²³

This study will directly address the ethical implications of intellectual and aesthetic eccentricism. In it, I will examine stories of "virtuous deeds" (*tokkō*) in *Kinsei kijinden* to demonstrate the essential relationship between *kijin* and virtue in the thought of Ban Kōkei, where *tokkō* is an enactment of personal potency rather than conformity to a moral norm. Specifically, I will show that *Kinsei kijinden* arose from several traditions where virtue is individual, by tracing storytelling and intellectual traditions in both Chinese sources and contemporaneous Japanese intellectual trends. Kōkei drew his ideas of individual nature as virtue from an ongoing tension in Chinese tradition between virtue as an individual trait and virtue as a norm, in texts such as the *Analects of Confucius* and the anecdote collection *Lienüzhuan* (*Stories of Exemplary Women*, Liu Xian, c. 1 c. B.C.E., hereafter *Exemplary Women*). Kōkei negotiated these conflicting poles through the idea of sincerity. More immediately, *tokkō* in *Kinsei kijinden* emerged from a tradition where *tokkō* characterized a wide range of people found in the Wei-Jin anecdote compilation *Shishuo xinyu* (*A New Account of Tales of the World*, hereafter *Tales of the World*). This study closes by contextualizing the idea of virtue in *Kinsei kijinden* within Tokugawa Japanese thought, namely Confucian scholars Itō Jinsai (1627-1705) and Ogyū Sorai (1666-1728). These scholars associated virtue with the individual, and opened the discussion of virtue to diversity rather than conformity. This idea of virtue as personal power informed the "virtuous deeds" stories in *Kinsei kijinden*.

Given the long-standing tradition of virtue as individual in early Chinese texts and Tokugawa thought, Kōkei might have written of virtue in *Kinsei kijinden* as a matter of course, rather than

out of conscious choice. Kōkei appears to have been the first to connect the idea of virtue specifically to the figure of the *kijin*, which Kōkei's contemporaries associated with Daoist texts. Kōkei's unconventional stance provoked a considerable literary response in his own times. Kōkei's friends did not agree with his wide-ranging interpretation of *kijin*, and one *kijin*-related text directly parodied Kōkei's concept. *Tōsei chijinden* (*Fools of These Times*, 1795) was a collection of stories of foolish people, focusing on the Osaka pleasure quarters. The author, who wrote under the pseudonym Tengō Dōjin (Crazy Tortoise Daoist Adherent), wrote:

Matters of virtuous deeds (*tokkō*) we will not put in at all. We will not discuss skill in poetry, writing, calligraphy, or pictures either because they do not relate to the classy aesthetic of the pleasure quarters (*sui*). If you ask why, it is because it resembles [the biographies of recluses] *Honchō tonshi* and *Fusō in'itsuden*, and it might be disagreeable to boors (*yabo*).²⁴

The writer's objections point out a central tension lying in *Kinsei kijinden*: the opposition between hilarity of foolish behavior, and virtuous, contemplative, and often eccentric recluses. This underscores that *Kinsei kijinden* more properly belongs among the accounts of recluses from ancient to medieval Japanese history than with the loud boorish humor of the pleasure quarters, and further demonstrates that in the eyes of his contemporaries, Kōkei's work cannot be placed alongside that of Santō Kyōden. Writings such as this show a surprised response to Kōkei's pairing of virtue and eccentricity.

Instead of opposing ideas of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, this study will address how individu-

Modern Japan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 645-59.

²² Brecher, 25.

²³ Brecher, 21-29, 108-10, 150-159.

²⁴ *Tōsei chijinden*, in *Naniwa suijinden*, ed. Kaneko Kazumasa and Ōuchida Sadao (Kyoto: Kamigata Geibun Sōkan Kankōkai, 1983), 70. *Honchō tonshi* and *Fusō in'itsuden* are biographies of recluses published in the early Tokugawa Period. For further discussion of the relationship between *Tōsei chijinden* and *Kinsei kijinden* see Kameya, "Paupers, Poets, and Paragons," 197-200.

als were seen as moral beings amidst the diversity of thought in eighteenth-century Japan. By investigating the intersection between virtue and individuality, we can learn how Tokugawa Japanese might have seen *kijin* as actors of individual possibility, and consider how difference in early modern times might have defined a community positively rather than negatively. This study seeks to attain a broader understanding of difference and community identity in early modern times, before powerful influences such as mass media, the modern nation-state, and technology-centered conceptions of historical progress.

Virtue as Personal Potency

Virtue as it appears in *Kinsei kijinden* comes from pre-Confucian tradition, where virtue appears as a power of the individual. Although many of the "virtuous deeds" tales seem to confirm moral norms, Kōkei emphasized the idea of individual commitment, where the individuals' beliefs gave them the power to do extraordinary things. In effect, the virtuous deeds emerged from the individuals' inner natures rather than from inculcated ideology. In other words, moral power arose from the self rather than from community ideals.

From the time of Confucius there coexisted two meanings of virtue, virtue particular to an individual, and prescriptive moral virtue. While Confucius is credited with taking the former and steering it toward the latter, we see evidence of both continuing until Kōkei's time. In pre-Confucian tradition the ideograph *toku* 徳 (J. *toku*, Ch. *de*) signified "potency," as opposed to its conventional translation of "virtue." *Toku* was a specific property and power defining a person or object so that it might be as various as there are people. Contemporary scholarship on Chinese classics has also observed this idea of virtue as personal potency. A. C. Graham explained, "*De* [J. *toku*], which has often been translated as 'virtue' (to be understood as in 'the virtue of cyanide is to poison' rather than in 'virtue is its own reward'), has been traditionally used of the power, benign or baleful, to move

others without exerting physical force. . . ." ²⁵ Later scholars also maintained this distinction between the pre-Confucian and Confucian traditions. In his translation of the *Analects*, Edward Slingerland used capitalization to differentiate virtue as a norm from Virtue as an individual quality, showing that both forms coexisted in the *Analects*. ²⁶

Both *Kinsei kijinden* and the *Analects* linked individual virtue with the ability to accomplish goals, demonstrating pre-Confucian virtue. In both texts, people responded positively to virtue as a personal inner quality. In one passage of the *Analects*, Confucius' disciples attributed his effectiveness to his individual personality: "Our Master obtains [information about foreign governments] by being courteous, refined, respectful, restrained and deferential." ²⁷ Because Confucius looked inward to attain his goals, rather than at his own motives, he could learn carefully guarded information. Confucius was effective because he worked from his own strengths, not because he followed customary rules. In notes to his translation, Slingerland captured the essence of this passage with a quote by Qing Neo-Confucian scholar Lu Longqi: "The sage seeks things by means of virtue, unlike ordinary people who seek things with their minds." ²⁸

To discuss this idea of personal potency, Kōkei gravitated towards the idea of sincerity or *makoto* as a kind of moral power. Instead of societal values, sincerity addressed the individual's sense of fulfillment. Through this idea of sincerity, *kijin* could invest their actions with their inner personalities, and enjoy personal effectiveness, as

²⁵ A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China* (Chicago: Open Court, 1989), 13, quoted in Nanxiu Qian, *Spirit and Self in Medieval China: The Shih-shuo hsin-yü and Its Legacy* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 127. Wade-Giles Romanization has been converted to Pinyin, Japanese gloss added in brackets.

²⁶ Edward Slingerland, trans., *Confucius Analects with Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2003), xvii.

²⁷ Slingerland, 4.

²⁸ Slingerland, 5.

did Confucius in the passage mentioned earlier. In Kōkei's accounts, sincerity inspired a response in the natural world, demonstrating the power of personal virtue. For example, the woodcutter Seishichi was described thus: "he epitomized the sincerity (*makoto*) of filial piety." Seishichi's sincerity was expressed in his satisfaction over his great efforts, and in nature's response to his filial behavior. In the story, Seishichi completed two people's share of labor to buy rich foods for his mother, who had served as a wet nurse in a wealthy household. One day, as Seishichi prepared to go to purchase quail, two quails fell to the ground outside his house as if Heaven were responding to his filial intentions.²⁹ Given the poverty of the woodcutter, it would have been a large enough feat to simply feed the two of them. Instead, Seishichi cheerfully exerted the extra effort to satisfy his mother. Kōkei wrote of Seishichi as a person who acted filial as a matter of course, and his power to move nature arose from his sincerity.

Along with nature, people also responded to the sincerity of *kijin*, underscoring the link between virtue and individual power. In Kōkei's portrayal of Kameda Kyūbei, filial piety was an essential part of his personal potency. To express the idea of sincerity, Kōkei described Kyūbei's inner qualities instead of his actions alone. According to Kōkei, Kyūbei's neighbors "felt his filial heart in his constant comings and goings" where Kyūbei visited his father two or three times a day from the break of dawn, and appeared at the sound of a cough. Kyūbei's neighbors could not but yield to the power of his "filial heart": they tore down the walls of a vacant house to make it easier for him to reach his father.³⁰ Just as people of foreign lands responded to Confucius' personality by giving him the information he needed, Kyūbei's neighbors responded to his filial nature by facilitating his activity.

In addition to sincerity, stories of women in *Kinsei kijinden* manifested the idea of individual virtue as physical power and mental acuity, in the

fashion of prescriptive Chinese biographical precedents. In these stories Kōkei featured wifely virtue and heroic deeds alike. Closing the account of warrior wife Nagayama Shōko, Kōkei asserted that "Shōko's wifely virtue (*fu-toku*) is like that of stories of clever women, chaste women, brave women, and so forth written up honorably in Chinese books — no, I would say it even exceeds that."³¹ Chinese literature abounds with stories of heroic women, ranging from dynastic histories to individual works such as *Exemplary Women*. Although the precise impact of *Exemplary Women* in Tokugawa Japan is not clear, Song Confucian-inspired Ming editions of this text enjoyed repeated publication in Tokugawa Japan.³² *Exemplary Women* merits discussion here because it offers fertile ground for comparison in the portrayal of women as individuals.

Exemplary Women upheld women as both individuals of sparkling intellectual virtue, and paragons of morality and chastity. While earlier editions emphasized the former, Ming (1368-1644) editions prioritized the latter.³³ *Kinsei kijinden* echoed both *Exemplary Women* themes of personal sacrifice and individual intellectual virtue. More importantly, it featured the idea of virtue as personal potency through the idea of sincerity, through the story patterns and the language used to describe the women. One such story was originally written by Andō Tameakira (1659-1717) in an almanac-like work, *Nenzan uchigiki* (*Nenzan's Hearsay*, 1713), and was copied by Kōkei almost verbatim.³⁴ Evidence sug-

³¹ KKD, 32.

³² Shimomi Takao, "Ryū Kō Retsujoden kenkyū josetsu," in *Hiroshima Daigaku bungaku kiyō* 47, special issue (Hiroshima: Hiroshima Daigaku, 1987): 26, 38. The same information reappears in Shimomi Takao, *Ryū Kō Retsujoden no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Tōkai Daigaku Shuppankai, 1989), 28, 39-40.

³³ Lisa Raphals, *Sharing the Light: Representations of Women and Virtue in Early China* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1998), 137-38.

³⁴ For the original text, see Andō Tameakira (Nenzan), *Nenzan uchigiki*, in *Zuihitsu taikan*, vol. 6, Chinsho bunko, ed. Tanabe Katsuya, Inoue

²⁹ KKD, 44-46. Although elsewhere in the text *makoto* appears as the character 誠, in this story the term appears in phonetic script.

³⁰ KKD, 49-50.

gests that Kōkei chose to copy Tameakira's work because of his high regard for Tameakira as a person, and for his work. Kōkei praised Tameakira's writing in *Kinsei kijinden*, stating that his writing revealed the "gentle, respectful" nature of the writer.³⁵ Because in some instances he referred to other sources without copying them, we might imagine that Kōkei copied Tameakira's words because they moved him, and because the spirit of the account matched what he wished to convey.³⁶ In any case, this account demonstrated how Kōkei's ideas of personal virtue resonated with those of others in his times.

Like Kōkei, Tameakira used language that reflected the idea of sincerity, in order to stress a relationship between Shōko's personality and others' responses to her. His vocabulary emphasized Shōko's emotions so that her actions resulted from her will, rather than from social conditioning. In Tameakira's account, Shōko's sincere personality showed through her care for a child that her servant conceived by her husband. Shōko adopted the servant's child as her own, and according to the account the child saw Shōko as his real mother.³⁷ Although Tameakira did not use the word *makoto*, he did use terms such as "loving care" (*aiiku*) and "abundant capacity for empathy" (*kannō no kotowari munashikarade*). Here, *kannō* 感応 is a Buddhist term for a "sincere heart" that reaches the gods and Buddhas. This term resembles the idea discussed earlier of sincerity influencing nature and people.³⁸

Both Tameakira and Kōkei described a woman's success resulting from her personal power guiding her actions. While the original meaning of *toku* meant to persuade without force, in the case of women *toku* gave them the strength to carry out force when necessary. Shōko's power seemed to emanate from her will, and al-

lowed her to act effectively. Tameakira's word choices connected Shōko's inner qualities with her effectiveness in the vignette where she killed an amorous intruder while her husband was away. He used the words *isagiyoki kokoromochi*, which can be translated as either "pure intention" or "ready intent," expressing both Shōko's courage in physically fending for herself, and her readiness to explain the events frankly to her husband. This word choice underscored her personal power, where Shōko remained above suspicion of keeping a lover, and the household could continue life as before.³⁹ In a similar spirit, Kōkei explicitly connected *kijin* individual personality to effectiveness in the story of a peasant woman known only as the wife of the woodcutter Shichihei. With the term *kokoro kikitaru* (literally "heart-mind being effective"), Kōkei linked her quick thinking and her brave action. When she went to look for her husband in the mountain, she found his abandoned pack in the road and an enormous snake hanging overhead. Surmising that the snake swallowed her husband, she rescued him by cutting the snake open with a sickle as it swallowed her.⁴⁰

In one case, Kōkei used the word *toku* to describe a situation that showed personal potency in failure. By including this story, Kōkei emphasized its power to move the reader. Kai Kuriko was killed in the middle of a landslide, and her body was found holding the hand of her younger biological son while carrying her twelve-year-old adopted child on her back. Her story spread throughout the land because she protected the adopted household heir over the child that she bore. Kōkei's language reflected his belief that Kuriko acted out of sincerity, rather than out of social conditioning. Kōkei wrote, "Due to this disaster, can't we say that this virtue (*toku*) showed all the more?"⁴¹

The stories of virtuous women in *Kinsei kijinden* crystallized the idea of virtue as personal, rather than as a set of societal standards. Kōkei was drawn to these figures for their qualities as individuals, namely their sincerity and effective-

Yorinori, Inoue Yorikuni, Umezono Ken, and Murase Kentarō (Tokyo: Kokusho Shuppan Kyōkai, 1911).

³⁵ *KKD*, 217.

³⁶ For example, see Kōkei's handling of the story of Hyōta in Kameya, "Paupers, Poets, and Paragons," 144-146.

³⁷ *KKD*, 31.

³⁸ Nakano Mitsutoshi, notes to *Kinsei kijinden* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2005), 37.

³⁹ *KKD*, 31-32. See also Andō Tameakira (Nenzan), 22-23.

⁴⁰ *KKD*, 35-37.

⁴¹ *KKD*, 32-34.

ness. The next section will address the idea of virtuous action in biography, shifting the focus of this discussion from the nature of virtue, to virtue as used to describe individuals.

Tokkō as an Expression of Individuality in Biography

When Kōkei dubbed his first chapter the "virtuous deeds chapter," he drew from precedents that associated *tokkō* with people, the *Analects of Confucius*, and *A New Account of Tales of the World*. In his foreword to *Kinsei kijinden*, Kōkei's friend Rikunyo referred to both of these texts, indicating their impact on their intellectual world. These precedents approached *tokkō* with different emphases: the *Analects* on moral standards, and *Tales of the World* on individuals. *Tokkō* appeared in the *Analects* in the context of discussing Confucius' disciples, alongside other skills later dubbed the "Four Branches of Confucian Learning" (Ch. *Kongmen sike*). While these skills later appeared as titles for the first four chapters of *Tales of the World*, *Tales of the World* recognized multiple kinds of virtuous deeds, and as a result the individual rather than a single standard for virtue shone forth. As I will show, Kōkei's use of *tokkō* came closer to that of *Tales of the World*.

In its initial conception, the Four Branches appeared as a set of standards by which people can be evaluated. This idea of the Four Branches is preserved in the foreword to *Kinsei kijinden*, where Rikunyo stated that the *kijin* "from the core deviates from the Four Branches of Confucian Learning."⁴² In the section referring to the Four Branches, the *Analects of Confucius* listed *tokkō* alongside three other traits, each followed by the name of Confucius' disciples excelling in that trait. By discussing virtuous deeds as a "branch of learning" separable from others, the *Analects* advanced the possibility of *tokkō* as an area at which an individual may surpass others:

Those known for virtuous conduct (Ch. *dexing*, J. *tokkō*): Yan Hui, Min Ziqian, Boniu, and Zhonggong. Those known for eloquence (Ch. *yanyu*, J. *gengo*): Zai

Wo and Zigong. Those known for administrative skill (Ch. *zhengshi*, J. *seiji*): Ran Qiu and Jilu. Those known for cultural learning (Ch. *wenxue*, J. *bungaku*): Ziyou and Zixia.⁴³

In later times the Four Branches appeared as a template for grouping individuals. In the Wei-Jin periods (220-420 C.E.), a time when Confucianism shared intellectual currency with Buddhism and Neo-Daoism, author Liu Yiqing (403-444) used the Four Branches as titles for the first chapters of *A New Account of Tales of the World*.⁴⁴ These four chapters also appeared in subsequent anecdotal collections such as Kong Pinzhong's *Xu shuo* (1158), and He Liangqun's *Yu lin* (1551). Such examples are recognized as imitations of *Tales of the World*.⁴⁵ Given that these four chapter titles did not appear as a tradition in other collections of tales, one can conclude that *Tales of the World* turned the discussion of the Four Branches in a new direction.

The use of *tokkō* in *Tales of the World* differed from the *Analects* in terms of emphasis. Emerging from an eclectic intellectual environment, *Tales of the World* focused on the power of individuals, rather than on any particular school of thought. *Tales of the World* arose from Wei-Jin elite literati culture, specifically the pastime of character evaluation. Like the *Analects*, *Tales of the World* linked individuals with a trait, and used the human figure as a role model. In *Tales of the World*, however, the author was concerned with the appeal of individuals, and resisted inflexibly defining traits and values.⁴⁶

While *Tales of the World* had been known in

⁴³ Slingerland, 112. Chinese and Japanese glosses added.

⁴⁴ See Qian, 126, and Wai-Yee Li, "Shishuo xinyu and Aesthetic Self-Consciousness in the Chinese Tradition," in *Chinese Aesthetics: The Orderings of Literature, the Arts, and the Universe in the Six Dynasties*, ed. Zong-qi Cai (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 250.

⁴⁵ Qian, 194.

⁴⁶ Zong-qi Cai, "A Historical Overview of Six Dynasties Aesthetics," in *Chinese Aesthetics*, 5.

⁴² KKD, 3, 5.

Japan since the Heian Period (794-1185), it had a considerable impact on Kōkei and his peers. Along with Daoist thought, *Tales of the World* evoked an exotic world to which Tokugawa literati aspired. Tokugawa *bunjin* shared many values with Wei-Jin society, namely immersion in aesthetic pleasures, and the celebration of diverse strengths in the individual. In other words, Tokugawa *bunjin* embraced strangeness and uniqueness as a defining value for their community. Rikunyo asserted in his foreword that Kōkei's writing rivaled that of Liu Yiqing, most likely referring to his individual-centered writing.⁴⁷ Beyond Kōkei's circle, Tokugawa Sino-philosophes learned about Wei-Jin gentry life through Wang Shizhen's *Shishuo xinyu bu* (*Companion to A New Account of Tales of the World*, 1556), creating sufficient demand for this text to warrant the two known Japanese editions dating from 1694 and 1779.⁴⁸ One such man of letters, Hattori Nankaku (1683-1759), modeled his everyday life on the stories found in *Tales of the World*. Nankaku further demonstrated his interest in the text when he created a Heian/Kamakura Period (c. 9th-14th c. C.E.) version of *Tales of the World*, *Daitō seigo* (*Japanese Tales of the World*, 1750).⁴⁹

In the original Chinese *Tales of the World*, Liu Yiqing focused on the remarkable nature of the individual, departing from the *Analects*' use of *tokkō*. Thus, *tokkō* appeared as a way to discuss a variety of people, not as a single universal quality. While in the *Analects* *tokkō* appeared as a single pursuit at which certain disciples of Confucius excelled, in *Tales of the World* multiple kinds of *tokkō* received recognition.⁵⁰ For example, Wang Rong and He Qiao performed two kinds of filial piety. Given the extreme nature of the behavior, these stories were not intended to provide role models, but to celebrate their virtue as individuals.

Wang Rong and He Qiao experienced the loss of a parent at the same time, and

both were praised for their filial devotion. Wang, reduced to a skeleton, kept to his bed; while He, wailing and weeping, performed all the rites

[After the Emperor expressed concern about Qiao] Liu Yi [said to the Emperor], "He Qiao, even though performing all the rites, has suffered no loss in his spirit or health. Wang Rong, even though not performing the rites, is nonetheless so emaciated with grief that his bones stand out. Your servant is of the opinion that He Qiao's is a filial devotion of life, while Wang Rong's is a filial devotion of death. Your Majesty should not worry about Qiao, but rather about Rong."⁵¹

By including divergent stories and opinions in the *tokkō* section of *Tales of the World*, Liu Yiqing affirmed a range of behavior as virtuous without adhering to a single standard. While a later tale asserted that Wang Rong in fact violated propriety in his grief, this too was included in the *tokkō* section.⁵²

Similar to the stories in *Tales of the World*, Kōkei portrayed *kijin* in a way that celebrated individuality, rather than one idea of virtue. This appeared particularly strongly in stories of foolish people, where *tokkō* affirmed the ideas of the *kijin* rather than any particular social standard, and the *kijin* themselves seemed to benefit the most. Such stories demonstrated that individuality is by definition virtue. For example, Itō Kaitei (1685-1772), son of eminent merchant scholar Itō Jinsai, took extreme measures to satisfy his sincere desire to help others, even when the actual benefit to others was unlikely. Kōkei included many vignettes that highlighted his sincerity. In the account, Kaitei's younger brothers found that they could prevent him from finding out about their nighttime trips to the pleasure quarters by yelling, "Fire!" whereupon he would

⁴⁷ KKD, 3, 6.

⁴⁸ Qian, 323 and 476.

⁴⁹ Qian, 319, and *Nihon koten bungaku daijiten*, s.v. "Sesetsu shingo."

⁵⁰ Qian, 104-5.

⁵¹ Richard B. Mather, trans., *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü: A New Account of Tales of the World* (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Chinese Studies, 2002), 9. Wade-Giles converted to Pinyin. The emperor that appears in the story is Emperor Wu (Sima Yan, r. 265-290).

⁵² Mather, 12.

rush to the roof and miss their late arrival. While Kaitei seemed to be deceived every time, he later explained that he knew the ruse, but wanted to act in case there actually were a fire. In another case, he pulled out a floorboard to search for a pair of fire-tongs, because he feared that someone might later hurt himself by falling through that floorboard, and accidentally stepping on them.⁵³ In this case, too, Kaitei himself seemed to benefit more than any other person.

Kōkei also included *kijin* who defied society by performing virtuous deeds for their self-fulfillment. Here, too, we see a dissonance between the individual's idea of virtue and those of society at large. Kōkei retold the well-documented story of the loyal servant Hachisuke of Sunpu, where Hachisuke refused to leave his master even after the family lost their fortune and dismissed the other servants. Kōkei stressed that Hachisuke acted not out of obedience, but out of his personal joy of service, "disregarding his own body by . . . living off of leftover rice and doing many other such things, for the pleasure of seeing joy on his master's face [*shu no yorokobi wo miru wo tanoshimite*]." ⁵⁴ Kōkei noted that when a local official berated Hachisuke for serving his worthless master, once again Hachisuke tearfully protested out of his desire for fulfillment: "if I am not there who will save him from starvation?" ⁵⁵ In this story, Kōkei described Hachisuke's personal potency to move the official with the term "attaining sincerity" (至誠), showing how his virtue had the power to influence others as well.

In the above discussion, I have traced the idea of virtue as a property of the individual between *Kinsei kijinden* and Chinese tradition. The best-seller status of *Kinsei kijinden* in the Tokugawa marketplace hints at the willingness of the reading public to embrace the idea of individualistic virtue. In the Tokugawa intellectual landscape, there emerged further strains of thought that confirmed the link between virtue and individuality.

Jinsai and Sorai: Virtue and the Individual

From the outset, *Kinsei kijinden* was a project that recognized and celebrated individual virtue as found in the human world rather than in universal norms. In his introduction to *Kinsei kijinden*, Kōkei encouraged his audience to accept diverse ideas of what is admirable or noteworthy, specifically to accept *tokkō* as wonder, a property of *kijin*. In this way, Kōkei upheld multiple ideas of good found in his society:

[My friends] responded forcefully, ". . . among [the *kijin*] there are also people who squandered their assets and steeped themselves in the mad aesthetic life, abandoning their homes and living as they please. You can't compare them with the wonder (奇 *ki*) in virtuous deeds (*tokkō*). I said, "Although there was wild and selfish behavior, I recorded instances among those with taste or things worth showing. It is like mixing gems and common stones, but this is one kind of wonder (奇 *ki*), and that is also wonder (奇 *ki*), and there is absolutely no need to split hairs. Only I did not include here unfilial and unloving people who drift in elegance and leave themselves to dissipation, or distrustful and disloyal people based in success and pursuing the ways of the world, not even if they were crazy stories that would make you chuckle."⁵⁶

By prioritizing loyalty and trust, Kōkei reinforced the idea of the self as a source of moral power, where virtuous deeds arise from inner personality, and are not done to satisfy a moral standard. This echoed not only debates in Chinese tradition, but also those in his own times.

As with that of Chinese precedents, Kōkei's intellectual climate was animated by a tension between virtue as prescriptive and virtue as individual. While Kōkei's use of *tokkō* was informed by early Chinese texts, it had its deepest reso-

⁵³ KKD, 37-38.

⁵⁴ KKD, 43.

⁵⁵ KKD, 43.

⁵⁶ KKD, 9-10. Translation referred to Marceau, 263, and Nakano, notes to *Kinsei kijinden*, 15.

nance with understandings of virtue articulated by Tokugawa thinkers Itō Jinsai and Ogyū Sorai, the forefathers of *kogaku*, ancient language studies in Japan. Although Kōkei lived after Jinsai and Sorai, he shared personal points of contact with both of them. Kōkei's close friend Rikunyo was a son of Jinsai's student Naemura Kaidō (1684-1748), who was featured in *Kinsei kijinden*. *Kinsei kijinden* included other members of Jinsai's school, like Jinsai's son Kaitei, and pupils of the school such as Namikawa Tenmin (1679-1718), Akō Incident poet Onodera Hidekazu (1643-1703), and eccentric scholar Kon no Ransai (1650-1731). Jinsai's most prominent son Tōgai (1670-1736) also appeared in one story. Although Kōkei disliked Sorai and his school for their arrogance, they too shared overlapping circles. Sorai's pupil Hattori Nankaku and Kōkei were roughly contemporaries in Kyoto. Kōkei's friend Rikunyo also studied Chinese poetry (J. *kanshi*) under Nankaku's pupil.⁵⁷ These points of contact reinforced their strongest link, their common interest in the study of ancient language.

Jinsai and Sorai's work in ancient language influenced both the study of Japanese language and understandings of virtue, in that it focused on the human world based in historical texts, rather than the world of universal truths.⁵⁸ Given this, their thought allowed variety in defining good, and was not inclined to adhere to inflexible rules. Drawing on Mencius, who predated Song Confucian metaphysics, Jinsai saw a moral order that affirmed the potential for good in people.⁵⁹ In Sorai's reading of ancient texts, virtue was as multiple as there were human beings. By focusing on a world defined in historical texts, these thinkers identified virtue within the human community. These ideas linking virtue and the human experience allowed Kōkei to make *kijin* virtuous.

⁵⁷ Takahashi Hiromi, *Kyōto geien no nettowaaku* (Tokyo: Perikansha, 1988), 89-90.

⁵⁸ Tetsuo Najita, "History and Nature in Eighteenth-Century Tokugawa Thought," 599-610.

⁵⁹ Tetsuo Najita, *Visions of Virtue: The Kaitokudō Merchant Academy of Osaka* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1987), 27-29.

Kōkei opened *Kinsei kijinden* with the story of a warrior-class sage, Nakae Tōju (1608-1648). Kōkei's account stressed Tōju's idea of virtue based on individual nature, supporting the logic of virtue as a *kijin* quality. In Kōkei's eyes, Tōju qualified as a *kijin* because he thought and acted in accordance with his inner character. This idea resonated with the idea of sincerity mentioned earlier, and the idea of virtue and potential in all people found in the work of Jinsai and Sorai. In the account, Tōju declared that the truly virtuous freed themselves from rules, and trusted their own instincts, rejecting the distinctions made by Song Confucian scholarship:

[Tōju told his students,] "Even though it does not belong in the same class as the desire for fame, the desire to only investigate the customary rules (J. *kakutō*, Ch. *getao* 格套) is like losing the vital power behind your true nature. We must release the heart and mind (*kokoro*) concerned with details, and not be mired in them, instead believing one's own true heart and mind (*mizukara no honshin*)."
His students were immediately greatly impressed, and burst into energy.⁶⁰

Through the terms *kokoro* and *mizukara no honshin*, Kōkei articulated Tōju's idea of self that is at its best when free from prescriptive ideas of good. In this way, Kōkei advanced the core idea that goodness started from the self rather than from the outside, resonating with the idea of virtue as an individual property.

According to Kōkei, Tōju abandoned Song Confucianism because it taught falsely that inflexible rules could create good people. Tōju on the other hand taught that truly virtuous action started from within individual nature, expressed by the ideograph for "heart" often translated as "heart-mind," *shin*. In the story, Tōju asserted that Wang Yangming's Confucian teachings were correct because they recognized that "heart-mind

⁶⁰ *KKD*, 18-19. Translation referred to Nakano, notes to *Kinsei kijinden*, 24, and Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 655.

(*shin*) and deeds from the start are one. For this reason, when there are good deeds (*zen*), you cannot have a person whose heart-mind is not good, and also you cannot have a person whose heart-mind is good and deeds are not good."⁶¹ Tōju argued for moral action coming from the heart-mind, an expression of the self. For Tōju, then, virtuous action emerged naturally, as a result of the individual's own quality. In this way even though he used the word *zen* rather than *toku*, his thought approached the pre-Confucian use of virtue, where virtue is an individual property.

Like Tōju, Jinsai and Sorai sought alternatives to Song Confucianism and inflexible rules. While Jinsai and Sorai had different ideas on the role of the individual in virtuous behavior, their definitions for the word "virtue" supported the idea of multiple and diverse ways to be virtuous. Jinsai defined the term "virtue" (*toku*) in *Gomō jigi* (*On the Meaning of Terms in the Analects and the Mencius*, 1683) and Sorai in *Benmei* (*The Rectification of Names*, 1737). In their discussions of virtue and virtuous behavior, they eschewed the idea of a single path of behavior for all people, so that the individual, rather than rules, had a role to play in the definition of virtue. In Jinsai's discussions of both *toku* and *tokkō*, virtue was an individual's defining property rather than an ideal. Sorai wrote of individual virtues (*toku*), which differed for each person.

Jinsai's thought resembled Tōju as portrayed in *Kinsei kijinden*, in that virtue remained an essential potential for all people, rather than something acquired or earned. Jinsai's concept of virtue worked alongside his idea of "way" (*michi*), which he associated with activity. In *Gomō jigi*, Jinsai's explanation of virtue relied on pre-Confucian concepts emphasizing virtue as a property rather than an ideal: "Purging and expelling is the way of medicine; healing and promoting life is its virtue. Burning and scorching is the way of fire, while cooking food and heating beverages are its virtues."⁶² According to Jinsai,

everyday activity was directed by the concept of a way, something that occurred naturally, not by a prescriptive idea of virtue. He specified, "The way (*michi*) involves flowing activity while virtue (*toku*) refers to what preserves things as they should be. The way naturally directs (*ryūkō*) activities while virtue makes things what they are." Jinsai's words were tinged with moral implications when he asserted that virtue "preserves things as they should be," but he clarified that "virtue makes things what they are," showing that virtue was a defining property, not an earned state of moral rectitude.⁶³

In *Kinsei kijinden* Kōkei demonstrated thought similar to that of Jinsai in his tales of ordinary people who did good deeds in the course of their daily lives. By describing people who acted in accordance with their natures, Kōkei affirmed the idea that virtue lay inside individual nature. Under an entry headed, "A Yamashina farmer and five noteworthy people," an old beggar woman known only as Kame of Rōya refused a reward for finding and returning a lost item. In Kōkei's account, the old woman explained her behavior in terms of her own personality rather than shared ideas of virtue: "If I were inclined to take this, I would have sold the item and kept the money."⁶⁴ Thus, Kōkei's ideal virtuous deed was performed as a function of one's character. In that same section, Kōkei also described two other people, both poor, returning money and refusing any reward.

In keeping with the idea of individual nature as virtue, Kōkei included a wide range of *kijin*, demonstrating the diversity behind individual virtue. This resembled the thought of Ogyū Sorai, who understood virtue to correspond to the individual, not the reverse.⁶⁵ Sorai believed that one

Tōgai, ed. Yoshikawa Kōjirō and Shimizu Shigeru (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1971), 37, 127.

⁶³ Tucker, *Itō Jinsai's Gomō Jigi*, 112-113. Original translation includes glosses in both Romanization and Japanese script. See also "Gomō jigi," in *Nihon shisō taikēi*, 33:36-37 and 127.

⁶⁴ *KKD*, 127.

⁶⁵ Tetsuo Najita, trans., *Tokugawa Political Writings* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), xxi-xxiii.

⁶¹ *KKD*, 19.

⁶² John Allen Tucker, trans., *Itō Jinsai's Gomō Jigi and the Philosophical Definition of Early Modern Japan* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 113. See also *Nihon shisō taikēi*, vol. 33, *Itō Jinsai*, *Itō*

could not apply one standard of behavior to all people since all individuals were unique. In *Benmei*, he wrote, "Every human being has an inner nature and is different. Thus virtue, too, is different from one person to the next . . . Even the teachings of the Sages, however wise, cannot be forced upon the people. Therefore, each and every one stays close to his inner nature and nourishes it to realize its virtue."⁶⁶ In this way, Sorai's idea of virtue also approached the pre-Confucian interpretation, where virtue was not a moral standard but a property that defined an individual thing.

In Sorai's view, since virtue was intimately connected with the self, virtuous living meant practicing that quality that makes one unique. In *Benmei*, he linked the virtue of the individual to life practice, the Way. In the following passage, Sorai identified a particular virtue (*sono toku*) with an individual (*sono hito*): "[It is said in the *Book of Changes*] 'If the effort is not from within that specific person, the Way as a whole will be in vain.' In other words, if *one's virtue* has not been developed the Way cannot be practiced."⁶⁷ For Sorai, virtue was not simply an individual property, but realized through practice that differed according to one's individual nature. For this reason he quibbled over the passage by Jinsai quoted earlier: "Jinsai did not . . . realize that virtue and inner character were not the same things. It is as though he is casually saying that medicine has a healing virtue and fire the virtue

to heat water. The issue is whether one realizes virtue through nourishment or whether one has the virtue from the beginning."⁶⁸

Sorai's thinking recognized people for their individual strengths. In the same spirit, Kōkei focused on an idea of selfhood guiding virtuous practice in his portrayals of *kijin*. Kōkei included a story where Jinsai's son Kaitei valued a certain servant solely for his individuality. The servant took orders too literally, and as a result had no practical use. When told to "let the knife rest" when cutting some abalone, he made a bed for the knife with brushwood sticks and a dishcloth.⁶⁹ Still, Kaitei recognized this extreme straightforwardness as a strength, and fostered it in his household. This thinking echoed Sorai's words, "if one's virtue has not been developed the Way cannot be practiced." Sorai might have agreed with Kaitei's judgment on the grounds that the servant as acting on his own virtue.

Above, in order to ground Kōkei's thought and *Kinsei kijinden* in an intellectual historical context, I have discussed Jinsai and Sorai's views of the relationship between virtue and the individual. Sorai emphasized the realization of individual virtue, while Jinsai stressed the individual housing the potential for good. By grounding their thought in the human world, Jinsai and Sorai made it possible to consider virtue in terms of the individual self.

Conclusion

The idea of virtue (*toku*) lies at the heart of *Kinsei kijinden*. *Kinsei kijinden* arose from a continuing tension between virtue as societal and virtue as individual found in both early Chinese texts and in Tokugawa Japanese thought. Dating back to pre-Confucian Chinese language, the idea of virtue as personal potency reemerged in Chinese and Japanese intellectual history when there was a renewed interest in creativity and individual expression, such as in Wei-Jin China and in Tokugawa Japan. Building upon these ideas,

⁶⁶ Najita, *Tokugawa Political Writings*, 44. See also John A. Tucker, *Ogyū Sorai's Philosophical Masterworks* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), 180-181 and *Nihon shisō taikei*, vol. 36, *Ogyū Sorai*, ed. Yoshikawa Kōjirō et al. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1973), 48 and 49.

⁶⁷ Najita, *Tokugawa Political Writings*, 45. My emphasis. See also Tucker, *Ogyū Sorai's Philosophical Masterworks*, 182, and *Nihon shisō taikei*, 36:50, 212. The passage Sorai quoted appears in Takata Shinji and Gotō Mitomi ed., *Ekikyō* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1969), 2:276-277. Tucker's note on p. 371 also refers to Richard Wilhelm and Cary F. Baynes, *The I Ching or Book of Changes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 349.

⁶⁸ Najita, *Tokugawa Political Writings*, 45-46. See also *Nihon shisō taikei*, 36:50, and Tucker, *Ogyū Sorai's Philosophical Masterworks*, 183.

⁶⁹ *KKD*, 38.

Kōkei emphasized virtuous action as a function of personal potency within the *kijin*, rather than as a result of indoctrination. In this way, Kōkei showed his belief that virtue was not a single path, but many. With the ideas of sincerity and individuality, Kōkei demonstrated that the individual was both the source of virtue, and adequate justification for performing virtuous deeds. By understanding virtue in terms of novelty, Tokugawa readers of *Kinsei kijinden* could be inspired by the wonder of virtue in troubled times.

Throughout the Tokugawa Period, writers continued to explore and expand upon the relationship between virtue and the individual. While Kōkei linked *kijin* to virtue as an individual property, later writers developed this idea into a connection between *kijin* and identity. After the appearance of *Kinsei kijinden*, different communities compiled their own biographies of eccentrics, or *kijinden*, particularly geographical areas and artistic groups. Such *kijinden* helped create an identity for these groups. Two Tokugawa examples illustrate this point. Between 1831 and 1844 lower level warrior official Okamoto Shinko (1780-1856) and his collaborators compiled *Tosa no kuni kijinden*, a scholarly biographical collection of Tosa (present-day Kochi Prefecture) eccentrics. Blind *haikai* scholar Takeuchi Gengen'ichi (1742-1804) wrote the manuscript for *Haika kijindan*, a scholarly work published in 1816 that placed *kijin* in the context of the playful urban poetry form of *haikai*. Several other Tokugawa works on *kijin* and poetry followed.⁷⁰ After the Tokugawa Period, from Meiji to modern times, writers continued to compile *kijinden*, and to link *kijin* and identity. This trend underscores the power behind the idea of individual virtue, and the importance of the text *Kinsei kijinden* in early modern Japanese intellectual history.

⁷⁰ Further discussion of these works appear in Kameya, "Paupers, Poets, and Paragons," 204-207.